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# Japan Christian Activity News

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# "RELIEF ACTIVITIES" PROLONG WAR

by John Nakajima

(Rev. Nakajima, General Secretary of the National Christian Council of Japan, recently participated in an international forum sponsored by the World Council of Churches' Fund for Reconciliation in Indochina (see JCAN #470, Mar. 14, 1975.) As part of that program, he participated in the forum team visiting Cambodia. Here he prosents his personal observations and reflections on that visit.

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The Cambodia situation may have changed as you read the following article. This is the report as of mid-February, when on the average, ten rockets were coming down in the streets of Phnom Penh a day.

Among the persons we visited were representatives of American Christian service agencies and leaders of local Christian churches. Team members seriously questioned activities of the former; we are hopeful about the latter.

Catholic Relief Service (CRS) and World Vision, Inc. (WV) are two Christian agencies among the various so-called voluntary agencies working in the Lon Nol-controlled area of Cambodia. Shirt-sleeved and roman-collared, Fr. Robert Gehring heads the big CRS operation. He spoke confidently while keeping one ear turned to an impersonal radio voice on his desk-drawer wireless. reporting in from the CRS-marked trucks: in mission. The director of WV is Rev. Carl Harris, who left the Episcopal priesthood "because church jobs just no longer interested me," to work for USAID in Saigon and other Southeast Asian cities for several years. He took up his present position a year and a half ago.

Common to both agencies is the fact that almost 95% of their funds comes from the United States Agency for International Development. USAID was established under the Foreign Aid Act of 1961. Directly controlled by the US State Department, its official purpose is to promote economic development and stability of foreign countries in order to achieve both domestic and international security. In 1967 at the peak of the Vietnam war its expenditures reached \$655 million, dropping to \$250 million in 1973. Its various projects include Food for Peace and Indochina Postwar Reconstruction, used mainly for "humanitarian" relief activities for refugees. It also includes military and paramilitary aid activities. In June 1970 John Hannah, Director of USAID, shocked the concerned world by openly declaring to the press that USAID is involved in front line activities of the United States CIA in Asian countries such as Thailand and the Philippines.

Fr. Gehring boasted that his monthly operational budget in the Phnom Penh area amounts to US\$1 million. WV did not reveal their budget, but in spite of their late arrival on the scene, we can safely imagine that their expenditures also far exceed what an ordinary church-sponsored agency could fund.

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#### -- Government Connections --

From the team's interviews:

--Since you are funded by US government money, your activities inevitably will be seen by the people as a part of US foreign policy, won't they? Harris and Gehring: Yes. We cannot escape that. But when you see all those suffering people, you've just got to help.

--There are many other agencies such as CARE and CRS which are engaged in the same kind of activities here in the same area with the same source of money. Why did the WV have to come in just a year and half ago?

Harris: Different agencies have different specialities. We cooperate with

each other.

--Have you felt any incovenience because you are using government money?

Gehring: Sometimes even if we are convinced about the necessity for certain projects which we planned and initiated, we get orders to stop those projects when they are felt to be contrary to US policy.

---What privileges do you get from the government?

Harris: We give more service to the government than we get service from it.

-- In what way?

Harris: For instance, giving of information. Often we can go places where government officials cannot go. We provide them with necessary information.

I regret very much that I did not have a taperecorder with me. But the above are actual conversations that took place in WV and CRS offices in Phnom Penh on February 21. Horrible things are going on in the name of the Christian church. These Christian agencies are not only taking part in the US' infamous foreign policy in South east Asia, but are also promoting it through information activities.

### -- Is It Really Relief?--

Another problem. Even if funds were not coming from the US government, we need to seriously indentify what makes up so-called "relief activities" in these war-torn areas. It is true that Phnom Penh is overcrowded by refugees. The normal population of 700,000 has leaped suddenly to almost 2 million. There is no word to describe the condition of the refugees except miserable. Cambodia is a fertile country. If not for the war, all these people could be living a rich, peaceful life. Ordinary citizens of the city are suffering severely from inflation and shortages of everything. On the other hand high ranking officials in the government seem to be enjoying an abundance of food and luxury goods. What makes it possible for these people to enjoy their privileges? Certainly one of the reasons is the fact that these "voluntary agencies" are taking the responsibility of sending \$1 million a month to care for the people, which normally is the responsibility of those government officials. The utmost desire of the common people is to end the war and to go back to their own homes. The fastest way to end the war is for the present regime to surrender. What prohibits this from happening is US military aid and the "humanitarian activities" of these voluntary agencies.

Strangely enough, neither the Protestant WV nor the Catholic CRS relate themselves to the local churches. Their knowledge of local churches is extremely limited.

#### -- The Local Church--

Like other countries in Indochina, the Protestant Church in Cambodia is related to the work of the Christian and Missionary Alliance. In the mid-60s, C&MA missionaries deserted the pro-communist, Sihanouk-controlled Cambodia. In March of 1970, the pro-US Lon Nol succeeded in a coup d'etat. Coming back after several years' absence, these missionaries "found a different church" (C&MA missionary's word). The native church had become independent and

and autonomous. The Cambodian Evangelical Church is a completely autonomous church now; C&MA is an independent mission which holds "friendly relations" with this church. Almost all of these Cambodian churches are accepting refugees in their precincts. The church we visited had about 200 families living under lines of shacks built around the church. The pastor (lay preacher) is living with them. "Every morning we have hymn singing and Bible study. We've gained about 700 members on our church roll." he says. Missionaries seldom come here.

Fr. Marcell, a Cambodian Roman Catholic priest, is the director of the local Roman Catholic committee for relief. He criticized the CRS severely. "The Khmer people have been an independent people. CRS is destroying this spirit. All they do is just to give food or medical care freely. This creates a spirit of dependence among our people. What we do is to give those refugees some work to do, for which we renumerate them."

In Phnom Penh, I witnessed both the worst aspects of Christian service and its brighter side.

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# INTERNATIONAL UIM MEETING HELD IN TOKYO

Biblically speaking, the men and women say they aren't doing anything new at all. They affirm that they're doing only what Jesus Christ showed them and called them to do 2000 years ago—to share God's message of liberation with the poor and oppressed, the exploited and outcast. They find security and joy in obedience to this original commission.

Practically speaking, the men and women are a radically new element in 20th century Christianity. Their ministry is beginning to challenge the assumption of the church as well as the practices of state and corporate power. Their struggle is very much today, in the slums, ghettoes and factories of the world, where they find little security or joy in the modern sense.

The men and women are part of nearly 500 Urban Industrial Mission (UIM) projects around the world. Most of the projects have sprung up since 1960, partly in reaction to what they considered the "Christian band-aid" approach to suffering. Largely through community organization, the UIM is seeking a more basic witness: to encourage and enable people to participate in decisions affecting their bellies, their health, their jobs and their communities.

Tokyo welcomed a large and diverse group of UIM workers March 13 - 19 when the World Council of Churches sponsored an expanded advisory group meeting on UIM. With 73 participants from 33 countries, the meeting was the largest of its kind since the WCC founded its UIM desk ten years ago.

#### -- A Wealth of Difference--

The diversity was also quickly apparent—the language and cultural barriers East and West, and the differing developmental and social problems North and South. This diversity was ultimately one of the most important asserts of the meeting. "At first our conversations resembled Babel," concluded some of the participants, "but we struggled together until we could share insights and hopes and go forward in God's liberating mission."

Much of the conference consisted of personal story-telling--witnessing to engoing UIM work among prisoners in Mexico, squatters in Ghana, laborers in Pakistan, or migrant farm workers in the U.S. The accounts invariably dealt with the suffering of the UIM workers themselves, including stories of regular harassment and even imprisonment. "The faithfulness of project workers in the

face of persecution (is) one of the most valid expressions of the church today," said one of the conference reports.

Perhaps ironically, the participants had more trouble phrasing their agreement than expressing their disagreement. The problem was not the English language (the medium for the meeting) but theological language.

The participants labored under the effects of centuries of Western Christendom's missionary thrusts into the Third World. These thrusts, often unwittingly tied to the colonial and imperial designs of Western powers, have given numerous exploitative and condescending nuances to words like "the church," "mission", and "evangelism." "God-talk can be used as an instrument of oppression," said the UIM. It urged the discovery of new theological language in which "God-talk is the power of liberation."

In a final paper, the UIM workers declared that "UIM finds itself in a dialectical relationship inside the church." While affirming the church's historical continuity as the Body of Christ, the UIM "must challenge those churches which do not wish to participate fully in God's mission in history among the powerless," they said. They expressed concern that many forms of church aid encourage dependency when they sould be promoting self-reliance.

#### -- Working for People-Power --

The participants insisted that true Christian mission is mission with, rather than to, the people. This means that the people, and especially the powerless, "should be seen as the subjects rather than as the objects of mission."

As the subjects of mission, UIM-with-the-people sees its immediate task not so much to evangelize the world as to evangelize the church itself. How can UIM help bring the church back to Christ? By insisting that, rather than the people simply being converted into members of the church, the church be converted into a suffering servant with the people, they said.

In other actions, the participants:

- --expressed UIM's concern about the growing impact of multinational corporations, especially their exploitation of Third World human and natural resources.

  "Priority should be given to UIM projects which take up the issue of justice and injustice with special attention to multinational corporations," they said.
- --challenged "technocratic values such as efficiency...which give only token account of human values"; as one concrete step, they urged local UIM projects and others to try to influence their country's delegates to the UN Human Settlements Conference in Vancouver next year.

--urged closer links between urban and rural Christian mission programs; they noted, for example, that farmer migration to cities not only tends to disrupt rural development but often leads to larger urban slums and a perpetuation of the "cheap labor" syndrome.

Although UIM workers invited from South Korea were not allowed exit permits by the ROK government, considerable interest was expressed in reports about UIM's role in the ROK Christians' struggle for justice. Following the meeting, 15 participants went to Seoul to witness these efforts and to lend encouragement.

Among the seven Japanese participants in Tokyo was Masao Takenaka, professor of theology at Doshisha University in Kyoto, who chaired the meeting. Minoru Ishimaru, associated with the Keiyo Culture and Education Center in Ichihara, distributed a paper reviewing the history of UIM work in Japan.

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Ishimaru defined the mainstream of the Japanese church as "theologically refined, intellectual and static". He said that, despite efforts of the National Christian Council of Japan to promote UIM work, "a majority of Japanese churches are still indifferent" to UIM-related activities.

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# FUNDAMENTALIST BIBLE CONFERENCE by Clark B. Offner

The Aichi Smaller Enterprises Center in Nagoya was the setting for the fundamentalist Bible Conference March 4-7. Conference speakers were Dr. Bob Jones, Jr., Chancellor of Bob Jones University in Greenville, South Carolina, USA (founded by his father and where his son, Bob Jones, III is now president) and Dr. Stewart Custer, Chairman of the Division of Bible in the School of Religion at the same university.

The Conference was sponsored by the Gospel Fellowship (Fukuin Doyu) Mission organized by BJU graduates. It consisted of one-hour meetings in the morning (Question and Answer Time), afternoons (The Christian Life) and evenings (Evangelistic Meeting) of each day. A dinner was also held on the final day for the BJU alumni who had gathered from throughout the country.

The 680-seat auditorium was sparsely occupied with some 60-80 in attendance at most meetings. The messages were interpreted by American missionaries, who did a commendable job considering the difficulty of such an assignment. Since approximately half of the audience was made up of foreigners, the messages were probably well understood by most of those present. The messages were preceded by an exhortation to patronize the book table stocked with books and pamphlets by the special speakers and followed by an exhortation for any unsaved listeners to raise their right hands to indicate their decision to seek salvation.

The messages themselves, however, were not aimed to bring about such decisions. Rather, their purpose was to encourage those who take a firm position of Biblical inerrancy and Scriptural separation. The emphasis was upon drawing strong lines of separation and keeping them clear. Confusion is said to result when these divinely revealed lines are erased or blurred. Dr. Jones denied that he causes division or stimulates controversy. Rather, it is the word of God that does so, and he is merely being faithful to it. According to Dr. Jones, not only is God a jealous God whose laws of separation were given to identify His people, but Jesus was "the most intolerant man that ever walked the earth," and constantly caused divisions among men.

In these meetings, not only the left-wing politicians and liberal theologians received verbal castigation, but the "New Evangelicals" were given their due as well. It was noted with a sense of shame that a BJU graduate who has become a leading Korean evangelist served as an interpreter at the Billy Graham "circus" in Seoul.

It was further noted, in regard to Korea, that despite what liberals and the news media report, Bible believers assert that there is no religious persecution there. Those in jail are there for breaking the law or encouraging violence and belong there. The statement that "social reform is not the business of the church" was greeted with enthusiastic "Amens". This conference gave a clear, uncompromising witness to the deity of Christ, the efficacy of His blood, the infallibility of the Bible and the need for separation from every smidgen of theological impurity.

One could not help but contrast this conference in many ways with the "Day of Hope Festival" meetings sponsored by the Unification Church (Toitsu Kyokai) and held on some of the same days in the Chunichi Gekijo in the same city. There, the 1444 seats were generally filled each of the three evenings as professional performances by an international singing group and a Korean folk dance team preceded the messages by a Japanese-speaking, Korean herald of a new messiah and a new age.

The contrast goes beyond such matters as professional programming and a full auditorium. Such intangibles as atmosphere and spiritual vibrations infusing these two gatherings—one stressing an extreme "orthodox" position on separation and division, the other with "heretical" ramifications emphasizing love and unity—were also quite distinct, with the unorthodox assemblage exuding the charisma. An unsuspecting, unsophisticated Japanese seeker who wandered (or was led) into either or both of these meetings could not but come out with a very confused, aberrant understanding of the Christian faith which had been filtered through particular personalities from abroad—whether from the West or the East.

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#### JAPANESE STAFFER JOINS CHRISTIAN CONFERENCE OF ASIA

Mamoru Tsuda has been appointed the first full-time Japanese member of the GCA executive staff. Tsuda, 27, is a member of the Kyodan Church of Japan and a graduate of Aoyama Gakuin, and is presently doing graduate work at the University of the Philippines in Manila. He will serve the CCA as Education Secretary from this summer.

At the General Committee Meeting in Singapore March 4-8, the CCA determined three priority areas for action over the next two years: hunger, human rights, and "living theology." Participants noted that although the CCA in 1974 still received much of its financial support from outside Asia, the percentage of operating funds coming from Asian countries is rising.

OOPS! Our typewriter is playing tricks... In our Feb. 28, 1975 issue, page 3 paragraph 5 line 8 should read "... Spirit or spiritual fullness is thought to be inevitably accompanied by the sign of glossolalia, introducing the 'seeker'..." And in the Mar. 14 issue, page 5 line 1 should read "life" (not "wife"), and two lines from the bottom of the page, "young" (not "your"). Our apologies to Mr. Offner, Ms. Post and Ms. Seaman and to all of our readers for any confusion.